



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES DISASTER AND SAFETY SERVICES BUREAU VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY SERVICES TEAM (VEST)

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO ASSIST WITH THE HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES NEEDS OF DISASTER VICTIMS. VEST is seeking employees from the Departments within the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) to volunteer to be VEST members. Participation in VEST is the equivalent of an additional work assignment. Extensive training is required, and members are expected to maintain and improve their skills between formal training sessions.

Members may be deployed to a Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC) as Care and Shelter Assistants, helping to coordinate State agency resources needed by local governments for successful mass care and shelter operations. Typical deployments are for three to five consecutive days, and may require twelve-hour shifts. Or, a deployment of 15 consecutive days may be made to a Local Assistance Center, where members provide information on grant recovery assistance to victims. VEST members may assist the U. S. State Department with the repatriation of American citizens from abroad, or may work with local government authorities and the American Red Cross to staff shelters during catastrophic disasters. In rare instances, members have been deployed to other states to assist with Care and Shelter issues.

Members receive extensive, mandatory training in all facets of emergency response operations, and participate in a variety of State and federal exercises. Training sessions are held throughout each calendar year, totaling a maximum of ten work days, including travel. New members receive an eight-hour orientation. All regular working hours spent in training or on a deployment are paid from the member's budgeted position. The Department of Social Services covers authorized travel, per diem and overtime expenses, in accordance with the requirements of each member's Bargaining Unit Agreement and Work Week Group.



Shawn Ortiz, Sr. Planner with Disaster and Safety Services Bureau, is the Trainer during a table top exercise of the Response Information System (RIMS), included in VEST training.
Photo by George Ross

Active deployment during a disaster is voluntary. Volunteers must complete and sign a "Member Statement of Understanding." Participation requires the approval of the immediate supervisor, who must also sign the "Member Statement of Understanding." VEST membership may be terminated at any time by the member or the supervisor. A member's assigned duties may have little or no relationship to his or her civil service classification.



VEST Members and Staff (Clockwise from lower left) Joanne Borchardt (EDD), John Driemeyer, Bob Butchart (DOR), Tiffany Brunelli (DSS), Del Dietz, Bill Vogel, and Jaimie Porter, work on Golden Guardian '04, an annual federal-State exercise of the WMD Plan.
Photo by George Ross

VEST membership is open to all classifications. The recruitment period begins February 27, 2006 and ends April 14, 2006. If you are interested in becoming a VEST member, please send a standard State of California Application and your resume to:

**California Department of Social Services
Disaster and Safety Services Bureau
VEST Coordinator
744 P Street, MS 6-143
Sacramento, CA 95814**

You will receive an acknowledgement and an information packet. Please include your email address. If you would like more information on VEST, you may contact the Disaster and Safety Services Bureau at (916) 651-8880, or Bob Butchart by email at Robert.Butchart@dss.ca.gov.